



# First Nations at the Forest Sector Forum



Russell Collier from Athyrium Services & Consulting spoke at the Forum about the Ecosystem Planning Handbook.



Robert Wong photo

by the BC First Nations Forestry Council

The BC First Nations Forestry Council (FNFC) reiterated the need for the BC Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) to consult directly with First Nations during the First Nations in the Forest Sector Forum held November 2009. The annual forum brings together First Nations from all over British Columbia.

A major issue for First Nations in British Columbia is the Forest and Range Agreements (FRA) and the Forest and Range Opportunities (FRO). These interim accommodation agreements have now run their 5-year course and are currently within a 1-year extension period that will result in a new or revised program in April 2010. The FNFC has offered advice around increasing the revenue-sharing component to better reflect value of resource extraction while also looking to longer-term, replaceable forms of tenure.

New policy initiatives reported to the roundtable discussions at the Forum included the *Wood First Act 2009*, upcoming proposed changes to the Silviculture Framework (Silviculture Discussion Paper, March 2009), the Commercial Forest Reserve Initiative, and a draft Ecosystem Restoration Provincial Strategic Plan.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), **Keith Atkinson** of the FNFC also gave an update about the mountain pine beetle (MPB). Important highlights from this presentation included sharing the results of the MPB Impact Assessment Program, which identified the priority issues for and activities by First Nations-affected communities, including how they plan to manage the impacts of this infestation. The FNFC commissioned a handbook that summarizes the Impact Assessment work and shares best practices. Atkinson also gave an update on the status of current policy and its impacts to First Nations.

In June of 2008, the FNFC began a study to benchmark First Nations-held forest tenure in BC. The survey was conducted in September and November 2008. The results currently are in draft form and the completed report will be available to all BC First Nations. **Pamela Perreault** gave an overview presentation, which highlighted the importance of benchmarking. **Michael Bonshor**, Visions Financial Services/Anika Forest Services gave an update about the 2008/2009 FNFC Marketing Initiative. Participants also heard from **Russell Collier** about the *Ecosystem Stewardship Planning Handbook*, which is a planning tool designed by First Nations for First Nations and is also a FNFC project.

There were many other key presentations given over the 2-day event. **Shawn Burns**, CEO of the Carbon Credit Corporation gave a presentation on "First Nations Strategies in a Regulated Carbon Economy." **Harvie Campbell**, Executive Vice President (Strategy and Development) from Pristine Power Incorporated gave a presentation that focused on opportunities for clean power, "Bioenergy for First Nations in BC." **Peter Woodbridge** presented the forest industry outlook discussion paper that has been submitted to the Business Council of BC. The focus of this paper is "Moving from a Volume Focus to a Value Perspective." The Business Council is reviewing this paper and is also developing a "2020 Road Map for British Columbia."

**Harry Bombay**, Executive Director of the National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) gave an overview presentation, "National Issues and Initiatives Relative to the Aboriginal Forest Sector." NAFA is currently developing a National Aboriginal Forest Sector Directory. **Rick Jeffery**, President and CEO of Coast Forest Products Association gave an update and offered a reality check on marketing BC Forest Products. **Frank Brown**, Heiltsuk Band member, shared details of the Heiltsuk community's



# reiterate need for consulting with FN




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engagement in the forest sector, allowing other First Nations to see possibilities for their own communities.

Feedback from the forum was very positive.

**Ted Stevens**, Forestry Advisor for the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nation shared his thoughts on the Forum: "I appreciated the opportunity to attend the Forum for two reasons. Firstly, I always enjoy meeting and sharing information and stories with my counterparts from all over the province. Secondly, the technical sessions were leading edge, with specialists in economics, marketing and research, industry, tenures, mountain pine beetle, forest fuel management, ecosystem stewardship, forest policy, bio-energy, carbon credits, and First Nations' experiences in the forest industry. This was a very memorable experience."

**Barry Hink**, Anaham Band Councillor and **Craig Kennedy**, Forestry and Resource Manager for the Anaham Band had this to say about the Forum, "The forum was very well-organized and the speakers were well-selected. As a large progressive community, we are always looking at economic growth and development. The speakers brought networking opportunities that will allow us to expand our current businesses. In addition, the success of the other communities at the end of day two was interesting and our band manager has already initiated phone calls with those communities." 



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**Top:** *The Sp'akwus slulum (Eagle Song) Dancers opened the forum.*

**Bottom:** *Keith Atkinson, CEO of First Nations Forestry Council, gave an update on the mountain pine beetle.*